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Amendment
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-US04

In The Claims:

Claims 1-33. (canceled)

Claim 34. (currently amended) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent ~~having a diameter throughout its length and~~ comprising:
a plurality of annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and
at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state; wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a tube.

Claim 35. (previously added) The stent of claim 34, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

B4 Claim 36. (cancelled).

Claim 37. (previously added) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 38. (previously added) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent continuously increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 39. (currently amended) A stent having an unexpanded state and an expanded state, the stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent ~~having a diameter throughout its length and~~ comprising:
a plurality of annular elements,
the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state with the diameter of the stent continuously increasing from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end;
wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a tube.

Claim 40. (previously added) The stent of claim 39, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 41. (cancelled).

Claim 42. (new) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

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a plurality of interconnected annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; wherein at least a portion of the stent has a tapered configuration in the expanded state; and wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a single piece of material.

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Claim 43. (new) The stent of claim 42, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration.

Claim 44. (new) The stent of claim 43, wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

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Claim 45. (new) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 46. (new) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent continuously increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.
